AIM

THE BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN INDEPENDENT MOVEMENT

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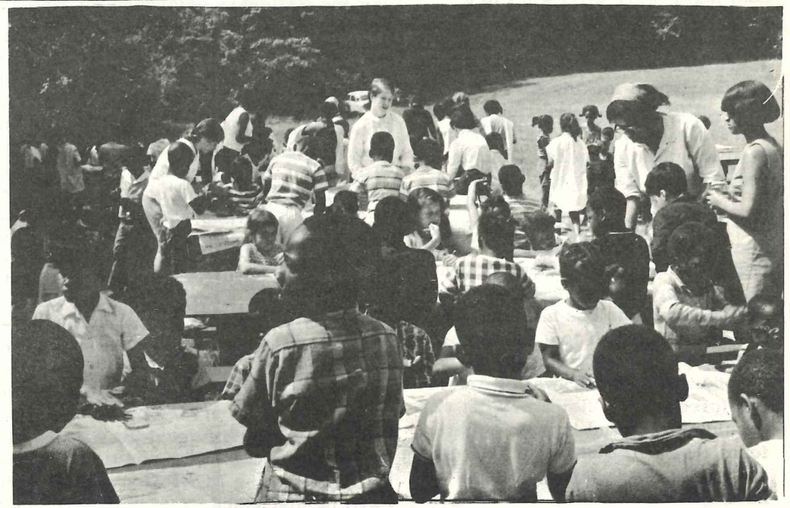
150 KIDS TRADE CITY FOR CAMP

by Ron Pressley and Tom Battle



A scene from an Arts and Crafts session at the HPA Day Camp. Green roof-tents are now erected over the tables for protection from sun and rain.

In the middle of June there was talk at the Hill Parents Association about getting some busses to take kids out to the country a few days a week to play baseball. Then the CPI money came through providing a budget for a day camp for 100 kids. When we began registration there turned out to be 160 kids who wanted to come.

When we got into this thing we didn't know anything about organizing a camp. Ron: "I thought it would be easy and then I found out how difficult it was." Each day you learn more about organizing. It's hard to organize kids - especially so many. The problems are mostly with the older kids -- since there are 150 instead of the 100 the budget covers, there is not enough money to buy equipment for them. Everything would have been all right with more books, more sports equipment and more arts and crafts supplies. Out of all 150 kids though, there have been only 1 or 2 real discipline problems. That's a good percentage. We straightened them out so now there's none. We told them not to come next day but that they could come the day after that and they did. I guess they enjoy camp so much they wanted to be good so they could stay.

An average of 150 kids from 2 to 12 years show up everyday. The first day only 96 came, the second - 132, the third - 160. The busses arrive at the HPA to pick up the kids at 9:15. After we take attendance we leave for camp and arrive at about 10. When we get there the kids get off the busses and we try to group them for baseball, sports, arts and crafts and hikes. The first day they all kept asking "Is this what you do in camp? Is this how you do it in camp?" At 12 noon they eat a hot lunch. Tyrone Pulley, Willie Smith and Melvin Blount cook the meals at St. Paul's Episcopal Church which donated its kitchen for camp use. Tyrone learned to cook working in summer resorts and Willie went to Person County Vocational High School in Roxboro, North Carolina and cooked in the U.S. Navy aboard the USS Fortress.

After lunch the kids are supposed to have a rest period but we haven't seen one yet. Afternoon activities include book hour for the little kids, sports, dancing and drama. We've just gotten tents for some shade so we can have classes in black history. At 2 they get a snack of cookies and punch. The busses come at 4 to take the kids back to the city -- most of the kids are asleep going home.

The schedule is different on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We have swimming at Wharton Brook State Park. In the morning we go straight to the park. From 10 to 11 about 75 kids go swimming in groups of 5 to a counselor. The other half swims from 11 to 12. Then we have lunch and after 1-1/2 hours of games, swimming again.

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AIM

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LETTERS...

.... FROM ANN ARBOR

Last night (July 12), I went to a meeting of the Committee for New Politics here in Ann Arbor (which is where the University of Michigan is). They were looking forward with interest to the New Politics Convention in Chicago at the end of August. However, this group had serious doubts about its value.

The focus of their discussion was whether they should support Martin Luther King for President. In general, they were unwilling to support any candidate unless he were willing to commit himself to a "minimal radical platform", including the unconditional withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam. What else should be included in such a platform, they will discuss in the coming weeks. But they feel that unless they have a commitment of this sort, they will end up supporting a candidate who is not saying what they want to have said, which would hurt their cause.

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.... ON POGROMIZING

Permit me to express my dissatisfaction with the statement by Fred Harris in your issue of July 5th, quote - "I think the mayor gave us the money because a lot of things have been happening in the black community - like what happened to the CPI offices, and windows have been broken in the Legion Ave. area and the Congress Ave. area."

It seems to me from the above that Harris not only approves of the window breaking but might even have instigated it, and since the editors of AIM had no comment to make on the above quotation am I to understand that the AIM approves of such tactics?

I happen to be one of those who had my windows broken not once but several times, been pogromized in effect, as were the others whose windows have been broken and pogromized. Actually most of these people myself included have been and are sympathetic to the AIM and what it is trying to do, supported the candidacy of Robert Cook for Congress with money contributions and otherwise. I went out of my way to ask my customers, many of whom were Negroes, to vote for Fred Harris.

That the "city" needs to be pressured to provide for projects to benefit our "underdeveloped" areas, and this goes for other cities as well, goes without question but window breaking and pogroms are not the means by which these ends can and should be achieved.

Best wishes,
Hyman Kaplan

The editors welcome Mr. Kaplan's letter expressing his point of view, and urge further reader particpation on this and other issues of concern.

THIRD PARTY IN '68?

By Edward Greer

Perhaps the single most significant question facing the anti-war movement today is whether, and under what circumstances, to run a third party "peace and civil rights" candidate for President in 1968. In fact, this question is no longer a theoretical one: AIM has to decide on a position by August 29th. For on that day, the National Conference for New Politics opens its Convention in Chicago: and AIM has been invited to send a delegation to help decide what to do.

On July 12 in the AIM office we held a panel discussion on this question with Steven Levinsky from the NCNP convention staff, Bob Cook, and Sid Taylor as panelists. Open and vigorous discussion of some of the problems, particularly the appropriateness of such a candidacy at this time, its program, financing, and control, followed. About fifty people were present, and it was agreed to hold an open meeting in August .

AIM will hold a pre-convention, general meeting August 21, 8 p.m. at 241 Orange St. The position AIM will take at the NCNP Convention will be discussed.

to arrive at definite decisions on our position at this convention. (AIM is going to mail copies of the NCNP convention newsletter to our entire mailing list; extra copies will be available in the office.)

Rather than attempt to summarize the meeting in detail, I should like to briefly outline a few of what I believe to be major issues involved in this question.

1) Who will the major parties nominate? There seems to be no doubt that Johnson will be renominated by the Democrats, and at best only a token opposition at their convention will be possible. (This is not to argue that in cases where anti-Johnson delegate slates are possible, e.g. California, they may not be useful, if only to expose the authoritarian nature of the Democratic Party; at present, however, this option is not feasible in Connecticut.) The Republicans seem most likely either to put forth someone to the right of Johnson with an avowedly pro-war stance (e.g., Nixon, Reagan), or else a candidate who is just like Johnson --one who speaks "peace" while actually supporting war--(e.g., Romney, Percy, "Creole of Venezuela" Rockefeller, etc.). In addition, there is apt to be an outright racist, Wallace, campaigning to the right of the two major candidates and thus shifting the political spectrum still further toward reaction.

This bleak outlook should not be surprising: Imperial wars always support domestic reaction by brutalizing the sensibilities of the people while simultaneously strengthening the grip of the oligopolies and militaristic forces on the political process.

2) Will a peace ticket, probably King-Spock, do well enough to avoid demoralizing the pro-peace forces? I myself do not see how the pro-peace forces could be more demoralized than they are already. We are all too aware of our lack of political power, even though we command the sympathies of a sizable minority of the population. The same argument of a "small vote" was used against running Bob Cook--yet no one says that was a mistake. On the contrary, by using his candidacy as a beginning it became just that; presumably the same option exists at a national level.

But this issue opens two others. Who would vote for such a candidate? And what would be the effect of a given vote, say 5% to 10%, on national politics? The vote would have to come from those groups or individuals who are "out of the system" sufficiently to see through it, yet both enfranchised and voters. Youth and many Negroes and poor transients are not allowed to vote; and about 40% of those who are allowed don't even bother to participate.

In the remaining one third of the population who actually go to the polls (perhaps the least likely base of support) we must find our votes. Presumably, voters can be mobilized from the Negro and other ethnic communities (notably the Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Jewish) and from appalled middle-class liberals. No significant trade union support seems likely, nor support from any large professional or business strata.

On the other hand, this small electoral base has a good chance of defeating Johnson, by throwing key industrial states, such as New York, Illinois, and California to the Republicans. Sometimes revenge would appear as a good-in-itself; and such a shake-up may also provide additional leverage to those elements in the Establishment who would rather extricate themselves from Vietnam than continue a losing struggle.

3. What would be the effect of such a campaign on popular understanding of how the system operates? The negative argument against running King is two-fold: a) that a liberal peace candidate will necessarily mis-educate the people with talk about Vietnam as "a mistake" and "negotiations" and thus play into Johnson's hands, instead of telling the truth about deliberate aggression and the necessity of withdrawal; and b) that because the campaign would rest on liberal assumptions and demands, e.g., more welfare, its domestic planks could be co-opted which would simultaneously strengthen the system and weaken the left. For instance, this process occurred in the Wallace campaign of 1948.

On the other side, arguing for a candidacy are two responses: a) faced with the prospect of political reaction, any voice of sanity is healthy and educative; and b) the nature of the program of the campaign has not yet been determined, and decisive action now by the critics (instead of sidelines bitching) could well achieve something decent enough to prevent co-optation. For instance, demands for prior community acquiescence to industry relocations would be hard to steal.

4. This brings me to my last point. If we are serious about the need to build on a national level independent and organized mass constituencies dedicated to far-reaching social change then we should begin to link together groups such as AIM, to pool resources, personnel, and knowledge, and a third ticket might provide this opportunity. But the basis of unity must also be decentralized, autonomous, and democratic organizational structures which put forth a vision of America which we are willing to fight for, and which articulates a program which describes in detail our alternatives and how they fit together.

I therefore believe that the most important question is not whether we run King, but how we decide the question. Participatory democracy, after all, is the most subversive concept and way of life in America today. And an open convention, where men and women representing oppressed groups get together to discuss freely how to achieve a better society, is already a long step toward it. Every stride we take together in good faith undermines a society based on lies and oppression: so we ought to go to Chicago determined to see the hard questions decided on the merits, rather than to achieve the mindless unity of the damned.

ETC.

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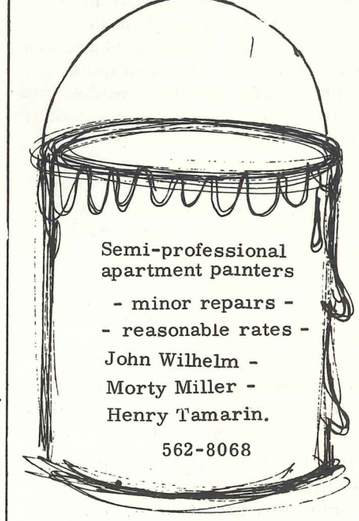


Activities in honor of Hiroshima Day

August 5 2:00 p.m.

New Haven Green

Speakers and special entertainment

sponsored by New Haven SANE.

AIM AND ALDERMANIC ELECTIONS

by John Wilhelm

As the Newsletter went to press New Haven was expecting a decision from Federal Judge T. Emmet Clarie on what kind of aldermanic elections, if any, will be held this fall in the city. Judge Clarie last year declared the city's existing 33 wards unconstitutional because they vary too much in population. This spring he declared a new reapportionment proposal passed by the General Assembly unconstitutional for the same reason. This proposal was known as the "Barbieri Plan," because it was drawn by Democratic Town Chairman Arthur T. Barbieri.

It appeared likely at press time that the city will have an at-large election for 30 aldermen. This course was advocated by the Democratic Party. The other possibility was for the judge to appoint a so-called "special master" to reapportion the city by computer, as the Republicans advocated. The American Independent Movement could not argue its position in the judge's final hearing July 24 because it was not a party to the original suit brought by the Republicans, and because AIM congressional candidate Robert Cook did not receive enough votes last fall to make AIM an official party under Connecticut statute. Following is the AIM Coordinating Committee's statement on local reapportionment:

"The American Independent Movement calls for postponement of this fall's New Haven aldermanic elections so that a Charter Revision Commission can submit a thirty-ward reapportionment plan to the voters in November.

AIM's Coordinating Committee urges the immediate appointment of a Charter Revision Commission, representative of all segments of the city, to work out a plan and submit it to the Board of Aldermen. If the voters approve the new wards a special election would be scheduled early in 1968.

It is about time the Democrats and Republicans quit making a laughing stock of the people's representatives to the city government. The Democratic Party's plan for an at-large election will demolish New Haven's long and healthy tradition of neighborhood representation.

The Democrats are interested in this plan only because it will encourage party-line voting and therefore create another rubber-stamp Board of Aldermen. No voter can be expected to choose from among more than sixty candidates for aldermen. The people will either stay away from the polls in disgust or pull the party lever in despair.

The Democratic administration has already done its best to destroy the legislative branch of city government. An at-large election would wipe out what few ties people have left with their representatives.

The Republican plan for appointment of a special master to reapportion the city by computer has a little merit. It is unsatisfactory, however, because no computer expert can know enough about the city to pay proper attention to neighborhood lines and ethnic divisions. The Board of Aldermen is the only place where people who live together and share common problems are represented. This tradition should not be destroyed by a machine.

A Charter Revision Commission must be appointed immediately to prepare a reapportionment plan and submit it to the Board of Aldermen in time for it to appear on the ballot in the fall. If the proposal is approved a special election should be scheduled early in 1968.

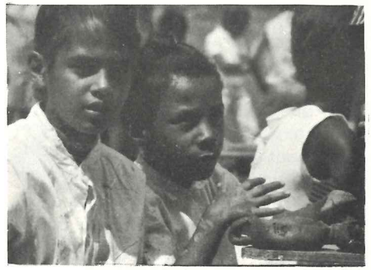
This Commission should include Democrats, real Republicans -- not those who have gone to work for the Democratic administration -- and independents. It should be broadly representative of the entire city, not just the Democratic party and Yale University. It should in particular include independent minded Negroes to insure that the already meager representation of black people will not be taken away.
The Commission should produce a plan for thirty wards of equal population. It should pay special attention to neighborhood lines and ethnic divisions. Experience has shown that an alderman can best represent a neighborhood in which people know each other and share common experiences and problems.

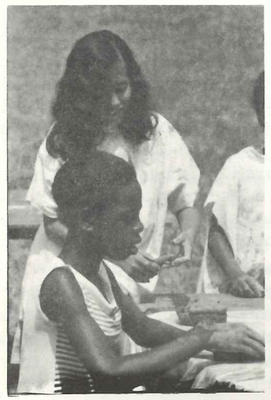
The cost of a special election would not be too much if it would help the cause of real democratic representation in city affairs. The city seems ready enough to spend millions of dollars for redevelopment and other projects without consulting the people. A few thousand dollars spent toward democratic government does not seem too high a price.
The American Independent Movement wants to make clear, as AIM congressional candidate Robert Cook did last fall, that such a reapportionment plan will not by itself correct the obvious decline of representative government in New Haven. The huge, well-financed bureaucracies at the mayor's disposal have simply overpowered the Board of Aldermen.

AIM urges, as it did last fall, that the Charter Revision Commission recommend making the post of a alderman a full-time paid job with secretarial help provided. Perhaps if this is done people from all income levels can take part in city government. The aldermen might also have the time to deal with the mountain of plans and projects turned out by the bureaucracy.
All these changes would only present the possibility of real representation of the people -- they would not insure it. Without a real commitment, sorely lacking in present Democratic and Republican politicians nothing can be done.
At the urging of the many people who supported Bob Cook's program last fall, AIM will enter the upcoming aldermanic elections and inject real issues into the campaigns. We hope and trust that there will be a ward system which will be worthwhile, instead of making them a bad joke as an at-large system promises."

AIM forwarded its views to Federal Judge T. Emmet Clarie who has scheduled a hearing Monday morning in Hartford to review the reapportionment situation.

day camp cont.





photos by Dave Dickson

There are about 10-15 counselors with the kids all the time. We could really use more. Mary Jenkins, Ruthie Long, Brenda Williams, Elise Brown, Morty Miller, Dee Caplan, Joel and Shari Wohl, Tony Mongillo, William Lathrop, Odel Tyson, Vicky Long, Emily Davidson and William LaPorte are there all day, everyday. Linda Prokopy comes Monday and Friday mornings to lead arts and crafts. Liz Henderson and Joan Stone come those afternoons to do drama and dance. Jim Perrill, William Hobbs and Mrs. Christian also come part time. Black history is taught by Dick Thornell, Fred Harris, and Jake Blum.

The land for the camp is donated by Mrs. Frank Whitney. It was a wonderful thing for her to donate that land -- the 2 acres around her own house -- the best thing a white woman could do for colored kids. She read in the newspaper that we needed land and volunteered. That's the way the whole world should be -- everybody helping everybody.

The camp is part of the poverty program. One of its purposes is to watch the kids for 8 hours a day so the parents can work. More important is to get the kids off the street where they can play safely 'cause of the way guys drive around here. We want to give them something they haven't had before -- it's their first time at camp. We hope we'll make them happy -- teach them how it feels to be a human being, to have the pleasures white kids have when they go to camp. It's good for them to be away from their parents for a while too. The camp is a wonderful thing -- it's new, but things are going better all the time.

"THEY WERE NOT BEING CONSULTED... SIMPLY INFORMED"

by Peter Rose

Visitors to the "What's New in New Haven" tent at the recent Arts Festival may have noticed an architect's color sketch with the caption "Proposed Henry Knox Sherrill Co-op Housing, Olive and Court Street." The nature and background of this proposal are matters which have recently concerned the people of the Wooster Square area -- Mayor Lee's showplace -- but the issues its raises concern every citizen of a city committed to "renewal."

To call it a proposal is misleading. The land has been acquired, the architect's plans are drawn, the money is guaranteed, land-breaking ceremonies are scheduled for August or early September. On the long rectangular block along Olive Street between Court and Grand Avenue, the Henry Knox Sherrill Corporation will construct a two to four story cooperative housing project of 60 units, 12 of which are intended for low-income families whose rent will be subsidized by the rent certificate program.

The project began more than three years ago when the Reverend Mr. Gerald Gilmore, Rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church on the corner of Olive and Chapel Streets, became interested in involving his church in urban housing. His church's bulletin carries a declaration that it is devoted to "socially relevant Christianity." The "socially relevant" aspect of the church's involvement was a desire to experiment with housing which integrated low and middle income families. After some consultation in Washington and with the New Haven Redevelopment Agency, a 60 unit maximum was established for the site and 20 per cent or 12 out of the 60 was hit upon as the maximum level of poor occupants which the necessary white money would tolerate. The most unique aspect of the plan is that the low income families will be carefully scattered throughout the project to avoid a miniature "ghetto" in one part of it; and despite the rent certificate supplements these families will be full voting members in the cooperative ownership at which the plan eventually aims.

To handle the financial and social arrangements and to shield the church from financial responsibilities, Mr. Gilmore set up the Henry Knox Sherrill Corporation, a non-profit organization, named for a prominent Episcopalian bishop, consisting of five members of St. Paul's Church who represented various areas of competence considered essential to the success of the project: an architect, a businessman with special experience in real estate, a banker, a lawyer with connections at Yale and in Washington, and a Negro lawyer.

The actual design of the project, like others built under urban renewal, has been molded by three factors: zoning, financing, and a suburban vision of living. Apart from an existing cleaners which fortunately seems to have squatters rights, no small commerical establishments are included in the project, which wiped out a small restaurant and grocery store. When renewal hits State Street, most Wooster Square residents will have to walk several blocks to the Grand Avenue Rosner's or drive to a supermarket in some other part of town to get any basic food supplies. Zoning based on the dogma of "strict separation of uses" is responsible for this aspect of the design.

Financing is responsible for the parking arrangements in the project. The unwary observer of the architect's drawings might get the impression that each unit has under-the-house parking. In fact, a look at the design for the whole project indicates that only about a sixth of the units have such parking, with the result that a high proportion of the land designated for the project will consist of black-topped parking area. The per unit cost of parking which would make practical and aesthetically satisfactory use of the space would have rendered the social experiement financially impossible.

Other aspects of the design indicate its planners' vision of the ideal: street level housing and a bit of grass for families with children, mildly individualized units to approach as nearly as possible the appearance of separate houses, a closed communal enclave which looks in on itself rather than out at the rest of the neighborhood. (Windows facing on the street have been kept at a minimum.) The design suggests essentially suburban aspirations rather than a genuine acceptance of the realities of urban living.

The most disturbing aspect of the project is the non-participation or pseudo-participation of the Wooster Square community. In the last year and a half, to my knowledge, five meetings have been held which might generally be labeled community participation. Each of the first four meetings was called in an effort to scotch unfounded rumors and head off secret resentments.

Each of these meetings has been arranged only for the Wooster Square Association, which has a membership of a few hundred in a community of over 8.000.

Normally less than 50 of the Association's members showed up for a meeting. It is easy to attribute this to apathy, but there was in fact no serious effort made to bring to the attention of all the area residents the issues involved.

At the first meeting, Mr. Melvin Adams of the Redevelopment Agency and Mr. Gilmore of St. Paul's addressed the Association and answered questions. (The session was filmed for Canadian television doubtless as an object lession in American Democracy.) Apparently the main reason for holding the meeting was that these gentlemen had been tipped off that many residents were terrified the new project would be 100 per cent Negro. This spring a representative of the Agency again met with the Association to discuss the plan. Neither the architect nor the rector of St. Paul's was present. The presentation was in the opinion of many participants highly unsatisfactory. The Agency's representative seem to lack clear information about the implications of the plan for Conte School, for the prospects of small local stores such as groceries and drug stores, for the social and economic viability of the whole area. On the other hand, many of the complaints of the area resident seemed to reflect a narrow-minded fear of the experiment in integrated housing. But what was worst about the meeting was that it gave the local residents a completely false impression that their objections -- whether well-informed or blatently bigoted -- mattered at all. They were not being "consulted" in any sense of the word, they were simply being informed -- and not very accurately or fully -- about what a particular group had decided to do in their neighborhood.

Unfortunately the Agency's reaction to the difficulties of citizen participation was to narrow further the number of people participating in discussion. At the end of the meeting, a paper was circulated and people who wished further discussion were asked to sign. These people (about 16 signed) were then individually invited to another meeting at which the architect concentrated on offering suavely phrased reassurances to vaguely expressed "misgivings"; but there was of course no two-way consultation. The plan was set; it was only a matter of "selling" it to a few persistently discontented residents.

A fourth meeting was held this spring for a weary handful of Wooster Square Association members. The Agency's representative reviewed briefly and vaguely all of the Agency's operations in Wooster Square -- past, present, and future. The lengthy question period brought up many objections to the tenor of the whole program as well as specific complaints about the Sherrill project. Few people left the meeting feeling either well-informed or happy about the role of the community in its own formation.

Site of future Henry Knox Sherrill Co-op on Olive and Court Sts.

The final meeting of the series was a public hearing on June 27 held by the City Planning Commission. The announcement of the hearing referred only to a "Petition for a Planned Development District" and then described the physical location. The fact that a Kimberly Avenue project was scheduled to be discussed first at the same hearing may in part explain the reluctance of Wooster Square residents to attend. The three or so who did attend had to listen to two hours of debate on Kimberly Avenue. The Sherrill Corporation project was then passed in less than 3 minutes; and one Olive Street property-owner, who is not a member of the Wooster Square Association, came away from the hearing with the impression that only well-to-do tenents would now occupy the new housing. Not a word was said about rent-certificates. Obviously no effort at all was made at the only meeting with legal status to present the project fully and clearly.

What did become clear at the meetings was the failure of those concerned -- the Redevelopment Agency, the Sherrill Corporation, and the small group of residents -- to deal with the important questions raised by the project: Why is so much desirable residential land near the center of the city being designed to accomodate so few people? Why is it going to be impossible for residents of Wooster Square to get groceries or fill a prescription without a car ride? Why should intelligent parking arrangements be possible in luxury housing only? Why was a school built which was inadequate for the area almost before the construction was complete? Why should residents be prevented from participating fully in decisions which so deeply affect the quality of their daily lives? Why must the pressing needs of the poor for housing be met by token measures decided upon behind closed doors? Did anyone ask the poor how they feel about being scattered and isolated in a sea of middle-class whites?

There are no easy answers to these questions. It is a sad fact that the most admirable aspect of the Sherrill project, its experiment in integrated housing, would have been the least likely to survive public participation. If nothing else, the story of the Sherrill project points up the need to rethink certain urban renewal policies if our neighborhoods are to survive: the policy of undemocratic circumvention of the public; the dogmas against mixed uses of land; the pattern of financing which precludes the possibility of building for the real needs of the whole community; and the pattern of imposing a suburban aesthetic on urban neighborhoods.

ann arbor letter cont.

Most of them did not believe King would run on such a platform. They see him as part of a group of liberals that is aiming to take over the Democratic Party in 1972, including Kennedy, Schlesinger, Goodwin, and Reuther, as well as King. They think this group would regard King's candidacy as only a "trial run" for Bobby in 1972, and would not seriously work to build a genuine third party.

The issues they raise are crucial. Certainly, no radical organization should ever make a coalition with any other group or person who will not help achieve its aims. If it becomes clear that King disagrees with us, and won't make a true compromise with his supporters on the left, but is only playing an establishment game, he is no help to us. But the organization in Ann Arbor is generally much more radical than AIM. Many members were interested in electoral activity only to promote revolutionary change by reaching and organizing people. They see little value in electing radicals to office, for they feel they would still be powerless in the face of the system.

But coalition is not the only way of copping out. Isolating ourselves from the community is a cop-out. So is failing to take what we can get, even if it's only part of what we want. It's not radical to refuse to compromise; it's just a way of being irrelevant. Also, I see no reason to believe that only revolutionary change can do any good. Even those who believe in it must admit that there is some good in things which only help make it more possible.

We should consider what King could give to the radical cause:

1) prestige and publicity
2) increased chances to reach and organize people
3) pressure to the left on the whole system
   a) on the ruling establishment
   b) on liberals
   c) on people at large.

The only question is whether King will do these things. If he will, he should not be abandoned just because he is less far left than we are. Maybe he won't fight for everything we want. The question is, will he fight for some things we want? Will he help us change the nation? I don't know, and I hope we will think carefully about it. But if he will, then we should join with him to get those things. At the same time, we should not forget that there are other things we want too, that we must also fight for. If we remember that, it won't be a sellout, but a strengthening of our forces.

Richard S. Beth

AIM

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